Flyin’ West Worksheet

1. Describe the *stasis* in the play: where, when, who, what, etc. in a paragraph.

In 1898, sisters Minnie, Fannie, and Sophie live in Nicodemus, Kansas, an all-black town. They settle West in order to escape racism in the South. In addition, Minnie’s abusive husband, Frank, makes an appearance, and Miss Leah is seen to be the motherly figure of this unconventional family. They have a neighbor by the name of Wil.

2. What is the *intrusion*?

The intrusion is when Frank loses all his money in a gambling match after a night out in the town. He beats Minnie, his wife, as a catharsis to his frustrations.

3. What is the *unique factor*?

Minnie and Frank arrive at Nicodemus.

4. What is the *dramatic question* that should be answered by the end of the play?

Will the women kill Frank to defend Minnie, or will he kill his wife in an abusive bought out of control?

5. Provide an illustration of the *two kinds of exposition* that the play has in it.

The first type of exposition is something known to only one character, and in this case, it is Minnie’s pregnancy. She reveals it in a life-changing moment. The second type of exposition is what all the characters already know. In this play, it is Frank’s abuse of Minnie, revealed by her bruising.

6. Identify the most *theatrical moment* in the play and of what importance it seems to be.

The most theatrical moment is when Frank returns after his gambling match enraged. He beats Minnie and is almost shot by Sophie. The scene creates the fear of domestic violence and brings the attention of the audience to the main issue of the play, the thing that causes the tension and must be resolved.

7. List some of the *themes* of the play.

Domestic violence, slavery, sisterhood, socioeconomic status, racial prejudice, racism, the power of women, desire for a home, pride in one’s accomplishments.

8. What do the principal characters *want* and what are some *obstacles* that stand in the way of them getting what they want?

Frank wants his inheritance but cannot get it because he has been cut off by the remaining relatives. Minnie wants to stay with Frank, but he may kill her from abuse. She also wishes to raise her child in a better world, but her husband may make that impossible for her. Miss Leah wishes to enjoy her freedom but her previous slavery takes its toll on her.

9. Describe some possible *images* in the play and how does the *title* help us understand the play.

One image that is very powerful in the play is that of Sophie aiming her shotgun at Frank. It is a moment where the tension makes everyone seem springloaded, and everything is fear and anger and a mixture of powerful emotion. It may also represent the bond of sisterhood being the most powerful bond of existence. Flyin’ West, the title, also counts as an image in and of itself, because Miss Leah discusses how she flew west to escape her tragic past where her family was brutally killed, especially after so many years in slavery. The flight stands for a rising up of the people and a release into sky which symbolizes freedom.

10. Briefly define the *family relationships* that are examined in the play.

A relationship of one-sided domestic abuse is seen with Frank and Minnie, and the relationship of motherhood is examined between Minnie and her unborn child. The bond of chosen sisters is seen among the women; they are not all related by blood, but they bond together as women do in sisterhood. Miss Leah is seen as the matriarch of the family, and as such serves as a sort of peacemaker and form of guidance.